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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: VP HASHIMI ON POWER-SHARING, RECONCILIATION, AND
FEDERALISM WITH CODEL MENENDEZ

REF: BAGHDAD 117

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Vice President Hashimi told Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) on January 20 that PM Maliki recently expressed his willingness to be a partner on the 3 plus 1 Executive Council and is optimistic about this new "team spirit" in the leadership. Hashimi expressed disappointment regarding some of the amendments in the recently passed Justice and Accountability law, highlighting an amendment he fears will force loyal, patriotic Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) employees to retire. On federalism, Hashimi said he supports decentralization to the provinces, but with a "strong" government in Baghdad. When asked about the regions law, he said it is "not a priority" for him. End summary.

NEW "TEAM SPIRIT" FOR POWER-SHARING

2. (C) VP Hashimi told Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and the DCM he is optimistic about PM Maliki's recent willingness to be a partner in the Executive Council (formerly known as the 3 plus 1). He acknowledged this new "team spirit" will be good for the GOI leadership. VP Hashimi talked about the many stumbling blocks of the last year in the political process and expressed hope the "stagnation" is over. He criticized the USG for focusing too much on benchmarks like the hydrocarbon law, instead of overall stability in Iraq. Senator Mendendez asked VP Hashimi about what he sees as priorities for Iraq in 2008. Hashimi identified reconciliation, provincial elections, power-sharing, and combating corruption. Hashimi would like to see sectarianism reduced in 2008 with everyone considered "Iraqi citizens" instead of belonging to a particular sect.

VP'S REACTION TO JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY LAW

3. (C) In discussing reconciliation, VP Hashimi told Senator Menendez he believes the new Justice and Accountability law will "partially" resolve the problem. He added, "I am not happy with this law." Overall, he said, he agrees with the legislation, but is upset with some of the amendments. Specifically, he said the legislation as passed by the Council of Representatives (CoR) will practically "shut down" the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), which includes former Ba'athists. Hashimi complained that if the law is implemented as passed by the CoR, a thousand INIS employees would be forced to retire. He said an exception was needed for those employees who have helped to stabilize security since 2003.

MIXED MESSAGES FROM HASHIMI ON FEDERALISM IN IRAQ

4. (C) VP Hashimi gave mixed messages in responses to

questions from Senator Menendez about his opinions on federalism in Iraq. Initially he exclaimed, "Federalism is a recipe for a civil war!" However, moments later he said he supports decentralization of authority to the provinces -- but with a "strong" government in Baghdad. In response to Senator Menendez's question about what Hashimi thinks will happen when the regions law is implemented in April 2008, Hashimi only said, "I am not giving it a priority." He added that it is a controversial issue and he recommends not pushing it quickly until there is stability in the provinces. "Each province can then select their future without any form of oppression," Hashimi said.

15. (U) Senator Menendez did not have the opportunity to clear this cable before his departure.
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